



Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)

General Business Frequently Asked Questions

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[Print](#)

What are you looking for?

The following FAQs build on the [Interim Guidance for Businesses and Employers](#) and [Guidance for Critical Infrastructure Workers](#). These FAQs are not intended for healthcare facilities; CDC has provided separate [Guidance for Healthcare Settings](#).

Suspected or Confirmed Cases of COVID-19 in the Workplace

What should I do if an employee comes to work with COVID-19 symptoms? –

Employees who have [symptoms](#) when they arrive at work or become sick during the day should immediately be separated from other employees, customers, and visitors and sent home. Employees who develop symptoms outside of work should notify their supervisor and stay home.

Sick employees should follow [CDC-recommended steps](#) to help prevent the spread of COVID-19. Employees should not return to work until they have met the criteria to [discontinue home isolation](#) and have consulted with a healthcare provider.

Employers should not require sick employees to provide a COVID-19 test result or healthcare provider's note to validate their illness, qualify for sick leave, or return to work. Healthcare provider offices and medical facilities may be extremely busy and not able to provide such documentation in a timely manner.

In most cases, you do not need to shut down your facility. But do close off any areas used for prolonged periods of time by the sick person:

- Wait 24 hours before cleaning and disinfecting to minimize potential for other employees being exposed to respiratory droplets. If waiting 24 hours is not feasible, wait as long as possible.

Follow the [CDC cleaning and disinfection recommendations](#):

- Clean dirty surfaces with soap and water before disinfecting them.
- To disinfect surfaces, use [products that meet EPA criteria for use against SARS-Cov-2](#) [↗](#), the virus that causes COVID-19, and are appropriate for the surface.
- Be sure to follow the instructions on the product labels to ensure safe and effective use of the product.
- You may need to wear additional personal protective equipment (PPE) depending on the setting and disinfectant product you are using.

In addition to cleaning and disinfecting, employers should determine which employees may have been exposed to the virus and need to take additional precautions:

- If an employee is confirmed to have COVID-19, employers should inform fellow employees of their possible exposure to COVID-19 in the workplace but maintain confidentiality as required by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).
- Employees who test positive for COVID-19 (using a viral test, not an antibody test) should be excluded from work and [remain in home isolation](#) if they do not need to be hospitalized. Employers should provide education to employees on [what to do if they are sick](#).
- Employers may need to [work with local health department officials](#) to determine which employees may have had close contact with the employee with COVID-19 and who may need to take [additional precautions](#), including exclusion from work and remaining at home.
- Most workplaces should follow the [Public Health Recommendations for Community-Related Exposure](#) and instruct potentially exposed employees to stay home for 14 days, telework if possible, and self-monitor for [symptoms](#).
- Critical infrastructure workplaces should follow the guidance [Implementing Safety Practices for Critical Infrastructure Employees Who May Have Had Exposure to a Person with Suspected or Confirmed COVID-19](#).

Sick employees should follow [CDC-recommended steps](#). Employees should not return to work until they have met the criteria to [discontinue home isolation](#) and have consulted with a healthcare provider. [Antibody test](#) results should not be used to make decisions about returning persons to the workplace.

If employees have been exposed but are not showing symptoms, should I allow them to work?

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Employees may have been exposed if they are a “close contact” of someone who is infected, which is defined as being within about 6 feet of a person with COVID-19 for a [prolonged period of time](#):

- Potentially exposed employees who **have** symptoms of COVID-19 should self-isolate and follow [CDC recommended steps](#).
- Potentially exposed employees who **do not have** symptoms should remain at home or in a comparable setting and practice social distancing for 14 days.

All other employees should self-monitor for [symptoms](#) and wear cloth face coverings when in public. If they develop symptoms, they should notify their supervisor and stay home.

See [Public Health Recommendations for Community-Related Exposure](#) for more information.

To ensure continuity of operations of essential functions, CDC advises that [critical infrastructure employees](#) [↗](#) may be permitted to continue work following potential exposure to COVID-19, provided they remain symptom-free and additional precautions are taken to protect them and the community.

- [Critical infrastructure businesses](#) have an obligation to limit, to the extent possible, the reintegration into the worksite of in-person employees who have been exposed to COVID-19 but remain symptom-free in ways that best protect the health of the employee, their co-employees, and the general public.
 - Remaining at home for 14 days may still be the most preferred and viable option for exposed employees.
- An analysis of core job tasks and workforce availability at worksites can allow the employer to match core activities to other equally skilled and available in-person employees who have not been exposed.
- A critical infrastructure employee who is symptom-free and returns to work should wear a [cloth face covering](#) at all times while in the workplace for 14 days after last exposure. Employers can issue cloth face coverings or can approve employees’ supplied cloth face coverings in the event of shortages.

See [Implementing Safety Practices for Critical Infrastructure Employees Who May Have Had Exposure to a Person with Suspected or Confirmed COVID-19](#) and [COVID-19 Critical Infrastructure Sector Response Planning](#) for more information.

What testing does CDC recommend for employees in a workplace?

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CDC does NOT recommend that employers use [antibody tests](#) to determine which employees can work. Antibody tests check a blood sample for **past infection** with SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19. **CDC does not yet know if people who recover from COVID-19 can get infected again.** [Viral tests](#) check a respiratory sample (such as swabs of the inside of the nose) for **current infection** with SARS-CoV-2.

CDC has published [strategies](#) for consideration of incorporating viral testing for SARS-CoV-2 into a workplace COVID-19 preparedness, response, and control plan.

Different states and jurisdictions may have their own guidance and priorities for viral testing in workplaces. Testing in the workplace could be arranged through a company’s occupational health provider or in consultation with the local or state health department.

What should I do if I find out several days later, after an employee worked, that they were diagnosed with COVID-19?

- If it has been **less than 7 days** since the sick employee used the facility, clean and disinfect all areas used by the sick employee following the [CDC cleaning and disinfection recommendations](#).
- If it has been **7 days or more** since the sick employee used the facility, additional cleaning and disinfection is not necessary. Continue routinely cleaning and disinfecting all high-touch surfaces in the facility.
- Other employees may have been exposed to the virus if they were in “close contact” (within approximately 6 feet) of the sick employee for a prolonged period of time.
 - If an employee is confirmed to have COVID-19, employers should inform fellow employees of their possible exposure to COVID-19 in the workplace but maintain confidentiality as required by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).
 - Those who have symptoms should self-isolate and follow [CDC recommended steps](#).
 - In most workplaces, those potentially exposed but with no symptoms should remain at home or in a comparable setting and practice social distancing for 14 days.
 - Critical infrastructure employees should follow [Implementing Safety Practices for Critical Infrastructure Employees Who May Have Had Exposure to a Person with Suspected or Confirmed COVID-19](#). A critical infrastructure employee who is symptom-free and returns to work should wear a [cloth face covering](#) at all times while in the workplace for 14 days after last exposure. Employers can issue cloth face coverings or can approve employees’ supplied cloth face coverings in the event of shortages.
- Employees not considered exposed should self-monitor for [symptoms](#). If they develop symptoms, they should notify their supervisor and stay home.

When should an employee suspected or confirmed to have COVID-19 return to work?

Sick employees should follow [steps to prevent the spread of COVID-19](#). Employees should not return to work until they meet the criteria to [discontinue home isolation](#) and have consulted with a healthcare provider.

Employers should not require a sick employee to provide a negative COVID-19 test result or healthcare provider’s note to return to work. Employees with COVID-19 who have stayed home can stop home isolation and return to work when they have met one of the sets of criteria found [here](#).

What should I do if an employee has a respiratory illness?

Employees who appear to have [COVID-19 symptoms](#) upon arrival to work or become sick during the day with COVID-19 symptoms should immediately be separated from other employees, customers, and visitors and sent home. Sick employees should follow [steps to prevent the spread of COVID-19](#).

CDC has a [symptom self-checker](#) chatbot that employers and employees may find helpful. It has a series of questions and recommends what level of medical care, if any, the user should seek. It is not intended to provide diagnosis or treatment.

What does “acute” respiratory illness mean?

“Acute” respiratory illness is an infection of the upper or lower respiratory tract that may interfere with normal breathing, such as COVID-19. “Acute” means of recent onset (for example, for a few days), and is used to distinguish from chronic respiratory illnesses like asthma and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD).

Are allergy symptoms considered an acute respiratory illness?

No. Allergy symptoms are not considered an acute respiratory illness. However, there is some overlap between common seasonal allergy symptoms and some of the symptoms that have been reported by people with COVID-19 (e.g., headache, sneezing, cough). It is important to take into account whether an individual’s symptoms are compatible with the usual symptoms and timing for allergy in that person.

Reducing the Spread of COVID-19 in Workplaces

How do I keep employees who interact with customers safe?

To keep your employees safe, you should:

- Consider options to increase physical space between employees and customers such as opening a drive-through, erecting partitions, and marking floors to guide spacing at least six feet apart.
- At least once a day, [clean and disinfect](#) surfaces that are frequently touched by multiple people. This includes door handles, desks, phones, light switches, and faucets.
- Consider assigning a person to rotate throughout the workplace to clean and disinfect surfaces.
- Consider scheduling handwashing breaks so employees can wash their hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.
- Consider scheduling a relief person to give cashiers and service desk employees an opportunity to wash their hands.
- Additional information on how to keep employees safe can be found in the [CDC Guidance for Businesses and Employers](#).

What can be done to protect employees who cannot maintain social distancing of at least 6 feet from other employees or customers?

Evaluate your workplace to identify situations where employees cannot maintain a distance of at least 6 feet from each other and/or customers. Use appropriate combinations of controls following the [hierarchy of controls](#) to address these situations to limit the spread of COVID-19. A committee of both employees and management may be the most effective way to recognize all of these scenarios.

It is important to note that control recommendations or interventions assigned to reduce the risk of spreading COVID-19 must be compatible with any safety programs and personal protective equipment (PPE) normally required for the job task.

Approaches to consider may include the following:

Alter the workspace using engineering controls to prevent exposure to the virus that causes COVID-19.

- Make sure the workspace is [well-ventilated](#)  .
- Change the alignment of workstations where feasible. For example, redesign workstations so employees are not facing each other.
- Consider making foot traffic one-way in narrow or confined areas, such as aisles and stairwells, to encourage single-file movement at a 6-foot distance.
- Set up, where possible, physical barriers between employees, and between employees and customers.
 - Use strip curtains, plastic barriers, or similar materials to create impermeable dividers or partitions.
- Move electronic payment terminals/credit card readers farther away from the cashier to increase the distance between the customer and the cashier.
- Use visual cues such as floor decals, colored tape, and signs to remind employees to maintain distance of 6 feet from others, including at their workstation and in break areas.
 - Consider these cues for customers as well, such as at the entrance or checkout line.
- Place handwashing stations or [hand sanitizers](#) with at least 60% alcohol throughout the workplace for employees and customers.
 - Use touch-free stations where possible.
 - Make sure restrooms are well-stocked with soap and paper towels.

Provide training and other administrative policies to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

- All employees should have a basic understanding of COVID-19, [how the disease spreads](#), [symptoms](#), and ways to prevent or minimize the spread.
- Trainings should cover the importance of social distancing (maintaining a distance of at least 6 feet), [wearing cloth face coverings](#) appropriately, [covering coughs and sneezes](#), [washing hands](#), [cleaning and disinfecting high-touch surfaces](#), not sharing personal items or tools/equipment unless absolutely necessary, and not touching the face, mouth, or eyes.
- Employees should be encouraged to go home or stay home if they feel sick. Ensure that sick leave policies are flexible and consistent with [local public health](#)  guidance, and that employees are aware of and understand these policies.

Use cloth face coverings as appropriate.

- Recommend employees wear a [cloth face covering](#).
 - Cloth face coverings are intended to protect other people—not the wearer. They are not considered PPE.
 - Train employees how to [put on and take off cloth face coverings](#) to avoid contamination.
 - Cloth face coverings should be washed and dried after each use.
 - Cloth face coverings should not be worn if their use creates a new risk (e.g., interferes with driving or vision, contributes to heat-related illness) that exceeds their benefit of slowing the spread of the virus.

Recommend that visitors to the workplace (service personnel, customers) also wear cloth face coverings.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

PPE is the last step in the hierarchy of controls because it is harder to use effectively than other measures. To be protective and not introduce an additional hazard, the use of PPE requires characterization of the environment, knowledge of the hazard, training, and consistent correct use. This is why administrative and engineering controls are emphasized in guidance to slow the spread of COVID-19. In the current pandemic, use of PPE such as surgical masks or N-95 respirators is being prioritized for healthcare employees and other medical first responders, as

How can I help protect employees who may be at higher risk for severe illness? —

Have conversations with employees if they express concerns. Some people may be at [higher risk of severe illness](#). This includes [older adults](#) (65 years and older) and people of any age with serious underlying medical conditions. By using strategies that help prevent the spread of COVID-19 in the workplace, you will help protect all employees, including those at higher risk. These strategies include:

- *Implementing telework and other social distancing practices*
- *Actively encouraging employees to stay home when sick*
- *Providing sick leave*
- *Promoting handwashing*
- *Providing supplies and appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) for cleaning and disinfecting workspaces*
- *Requiring all employees to wear cloth face coverings*

In workplaces where it is not possible to eliminate face-to-face contact (such as retail), consider assigning employees who are at higher risk of severe illness work tasks that allow them to maintain a 6-foot distance from others, if feasible.

Employers should not require employees to provide a note from their healthcare provider when they are sick and instead allow them to inform their supervisors or employee health services when they have conditions that put them at higher risk for diseases.

When is a cloth face covering not appropriate while at work, and what can employees wear instead? —

Cloth face coverings can prevent the wearer from spreading COVID-19 to others, but they may not always be appropriate. Employees should consider using an alternative under certain conditions at work, including:

- If they have trouble breathing.
- If they are unable to remove it without help.
- If it interferes with vision, glasses, or eye protection.
- If straps, strings, or other parts of the covering could get caught in equipment.
- If other work hazards associated with wearing the covering are identified and cannot be addressed without removal of the face covering.

Cloth face coverings should **not** be worn if their use creates a new risk (e.g., interferes with driving or vision, contributes to heat-related illness) that exceeds their benefit of slowing the spread of the virus.

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration ([OSHA](#))   suggests that an employee wear a face shield if a cloth face covering is recommended but the employee cannot tolerate wearing a cloth face covering. If used, a face shield should cover the entire front and sides of the face and extend below the chin.

Do my employees need to wear cloth face coverings or personal protective equipment (PPE) (such as N95 respirators, gloves) to protect themselves while working? —

CDC recommends [wearing cloth face coverings](#) in public settings where other social distancing measures are difficult to maintain, especially in areas of significant community transmission. Cloth face coverings may prevent people who don't know they have the virus from transmitting it to others. These face coverings are not surgical masks or respirators and are not appropriate substitutes for them in workplaces where masks or respirators are recommended or required.

Employees should continue to follow their routine policies and procedures for PPE (if any) that they would ordinarily use for their job tasks. When cleaning and disinfecting, employees should always wear gloves and gowns appropriate for the chemicals being used. Additional personal protective equipment (PPE) may be needed based on setting and product.

CDC does not recommend the use of PPE in workplaces where it is not routinely recommended. Facilities can use the [hierarchy of controls](#), such as administrative, and engineering controls – these strategies are even more effective at preventing exposures than wearing PPE.

What does source control mean? —

Source control is a term used to describe measures (e.g., cloth face coverings or face shields) intended to prevent people with COVID-19 from spreading the disease to others. COVID-19 is spread through droplets produced when an infected person coughs, sneezes, or talks. Evidence suggests that people who have mild symptoms or no symptoms can spread it to others without realizing they are infected. Cloth face coverings and face shields are types of source control that provide a barrier between droplets produced from a potentially infected person and other people, reducing the likelihood of transmitting the virus.

Are cloth face coverings the same as personal protective equipment (PPE)? —

No, cloth face coverings are not PPE. These face coverings are not respirators and are not appropriate substitutes for them in workplaces where respirators are recommended or required for respiratory protection.

How should cloth face coverings worn at work be handled, stored, and washed?

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When wearing a [cloth face covering](#), it should fit over the nose and mouth, fit snugly but comfortably against the side of the face, and be secured with ties or ear loops. The cloth face covering should allow the wearer to breathe without restriction.

Employees should avoid touching their eyes, nose, or mouth as well as the inside or outside of the face covering while putting on, wearing, and removing it. When putting on and removing it, they should only touch the ties or ear loops.

If storing the cloth face covering while at work, employees should place the used cloth face covering into a container or paper bag labeled with the employee's name.

Cloth face coverings should not be shared with others unless they are washed and dried first.

If the cloth face covering becomes wet, visibly soiled, or contaminated at work, it should be removed and stored to be laundered later. The employee should put on a clean cloth face covering or disposable face mask. If cloth face coverings are provided by the employer, a clean face covering should be issued to replace the soiled one.

Employees should wash hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds before and after putting on, touching, or removing cloth face coverings. If soap and water are not available, they should use a hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol.

[Laundry](#) instructions depend on the cloth used to make the face covering. In general, cloth face coverings should be washed regularly (e.g., daily after each shift) using water and a mild detergent and dried completely in a hot dryer. If a washing machine and dryer are not available, an alternative is to soak the cloth face covering in a diluted bleach (0.1%) solution, rinse, and air dry completely. Hands should be washed before laundering the cloth face coverings.

How often should my employees wash their hands while at work?

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CDC recommends employees protect themselves from respiratory illness with everyday preventive actions, including good [hand hygiene](#). Employees should wash hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, or use a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol if soap and water are not readily available, especially during key times when persons are likely to be infected by or spread germs:

- After blowing one's nose, coughing, or sneezing
- Before, during, and after preparing food
- After using the toilet
- After touching garbage
- Before and after the work shift
- Before and after work breaks
- After touching objects that have been handled by customers or other employees

Employees should take the following [steps to protect themselves](#) at work:

- Follow the policies and procedures of the employer related to illness, cleaning and disinfecting, and work meetings and travel.
- Stay home if sick, except to get medical care.
- Practice social distancing by keeping at least 6 feet away from fellow co-employees, customers, and visitors when possible.
- Wear cloth face coverings, especially when social distancing is not possible.
- Employees should inform their supervisor if they or their colleagues develop [symptoms](#) at work. No one with COVID-19 [symptoms](#) should be present at the workplace.
- Wash hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after blowing noses, [coughing, or sneezing](#), or having been in a public place.
 - Use hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol if soap and water are not available.
- Avoid touching eyes, nose, and mouth.
- To the extent possible, avoid touching high-touch surfaces in public places – elevator buttons, door handles, handrails, etc.
- Where possible, avoid direct physical contact such as shaking hands with people.
- Minimize handling cash, credit cards, and mobile or electronic devices when possible.
- Avoid all non-essential travel.

Should we be screening employees for COVID-19 symptoms (such as temperature checks)? What is the best way to do that?

Screening employees is an optional strategy that employers may use. Performing screening or health checks will not be completely effective because asymptomatic individuals or individuals with mild non-specific symptoms may not realize they are infected and may pass through screening. Screening and health checks are not a replacement for other protective measures such as social distancing.

Consider encouraging individuals planning to enter the workplace to self-screen prior to coming onsite and not to attempt to enter the workplace if any of the following are present:

- [Symptoms](#) of COVID-19
- Fever equal to or higher than 100.4°F*
- Are under evaluation for COVID-19 (for example, waiting for the results of a viral test to confirm infection)
- Have been diagnosed with COVID-19 and not yet cleared to discontinue isolation

*A lower temperature threshold (e.g., 100.0°F) may be used, especially in healthcare settings.

Content of screening questions

If you decide to actively screen employees for symptoms rather than relying on self-screening, consider which symptoms to include in your assessment. Although there are [many different symptoms that may be associated with COVID-19](#), you may not want to treat every employee with a single non-specific symptom (e.g., a headache) as a suspect case of COVID-19 and send them home until they meet [criteria for discontinuation of isolation](#).

Consider focusing the screening questions on “new” or “unexpected” symptoms (e.g., a chronic cough would not be a positive screen). Consider including these symptoms:

- Fever or feeling feverish (chills, sweating)
- New cough
- Difficulty breathing
- Sore throat
- Muscle aches or body aches
- Vomiting or diarrhea
- New loss of taste or smell

Protection of screeners

There are several methods that employers can use to protect the employee conducting the screening. The most protective methods incorporate social distancing (maintaining a distance of 6 feet from others), or physical barriers to eliminate or minimize the screener’s exposures due to close contact with a person who has symptoms during screening. Examples to consider that incorporate these types of controls for temperature screening include:

- **Reliance on Social Distancing:** Ask employees to take their own temperature either before coming to the workplace or upon arrival at the workplace. Upon their arrival, stand at least 6 feet away from the employee and:
 - Ask the employee to confirm that their temperature is less than 100.4° F (38.0° C) and confirm that they are not experiencing coughing or shortness of breath.
 - Make a visual inspection of the employee for signs of illness, which could include flushed cheeks or fatigue.
 - Screening staff do not need to wear personal protective equipment (PPE) if they can maintain a distance of 6 feet.
- **Reliance on Barrier/Partition Controls:** During screening, the screener stands behind a physical barrier, such as a glass or plastic window or partition, that can protect the screener’s face and mucous membranes from respiratory droplets that may be produced when the employee sneezes, coughs, or talks. Upon arrival, the screener should wash hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or, if soap and water are not available, use hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol. Then:
 - Make a visual inspection of the employee for signs of illness, which could include flushed cheeks or fatigue.
 - Conduct temperature and symptom screening using this protocol:
 - Put on disposable gloves.
 - Check the employee’s temperature, reaching around the partition or through the window. Make sure the screener’s face stays behind the barrier at all times during the screening.
 - **If performing a temperature check on multiple individuals, make sure that you use a clean pair of gloves for each employee and that the thermometer has been thoroughly cleaned in between each check.** If disposable or non-contact thermometers are used and you did not have physical contact with an individual, you do not need to change gloves before the next check. If non-contact thermometers are used, clean and disinfect them according to manufacturer’s instructions and facility policies.

- Remove and discard PPE (gloves), and wash hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol.

If social distance or barrier controls cannot be implemented during screening, PPE can be used when the screener is within 6 feet of an employee during screening. However, reliance on PPE alone is a less effective control and more difficult to implement given PPE shortages and training requirements.

- **Reliance on Personal Protective Equipment (PPE):** Upon arrival, the screener should wash their hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or use hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol, put on a face mask, eye protection (goggles or disposable face shield that fully covers the front and sides of the face), and a single pair of disposable gloves. A gown could be considered if extensive contact with an employee is anticipated. Then:
 - Make a visual inspection of the employee for signs of illness, which could include flushed cheeks or fatigue, and confirm that the employee is not experiencing coughing or shortness of breath.
 - Take the employee's temperature.
 - **If performing a temperature check on multiple individuals, make sure that you use a clean pair of gloves for each employee and that the thermometer has been thoroughly cleaned in between each check.** If disposable or non-contact thermometers are used and you did not have physical contact with an individual, you do not need to change gloves before the next check. If non-contact thermometers are used, you should clean and disinfect them according to manufacturer's instructions and facility policies.
 - After each screening or after several screenings, where you did not have physical contact with an individual, remove and discard PPE and wash hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or use hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol.

How do I handle personal protective equipment (PPE) waste?

Discard PPE into a trash can. Facility waste does not need disinfection.

Healthy Business Operations

What is social distancing and how can my workplace do that?

Social distancing means avoiding [large gatherings](#) and maintaining distance (at least 6 feet) from others when possible. Strategies that businesses could use include:

- Allowing flexible worksites (such as telework)
- Allowing flexible work hours (such as staggered shifts)
- Increasing physical space between employees at the worksite
- Increasing physical space between employees and customers (such as a drive-through and partitions)
- Implementing flexible meeting and travel options (such as postponing non-essential meetings or events)
- Delivering services remotely (e.g., phone, video, or web)
- Delivering products through curbside pick-up or delivery

I don't provide paid sick leave to my employees. What should I do?

Employers that do not currently offer sick leave to some or all of their employees may want to draft non-punitive "emergency sick leave" policies. Ensure that sick leave policies are flexible and consistent with public health guidance and that employees are aware of and understand these policies.

The [Families First Coronavirus Response Act](#) (FFCRA or Act) requires certain employers to provide their employees with paid sick leave or expanded family and medical leave for specified reasons related to COVID-19.

Employers with fewer than 500 employees are eligible for 100% tax credits for Families First Coronavirus Response Act COVID-19 paid leave provided through December 31, 2020, up to certain limits.

Should I require employees to provide a doctor's note or positive COVID-19 test result?

Employers should not require sick employees to provide a COVID-19 test result or a healthcare provider's note to validate their illness, qualify for sick leave, or to return to work. Healthcare provider offices and medical facilities may be extremely busy and not able to provide such documentation in a timely manner.

Should I cancel my meetings and conferences?

Carefully consider whether travel is necessary and use videoconferencing or teleconferencing when possible for work-related meetings and gatherings. Employers should consider canceling, adjusting, or postponing large work-related meetings or gatherings that can only occur in-person. Follow [CDC guidance for events and mass gatherings](#) and consider resuming non-essential travel in accordance with state and local regulations and guidance.

When videoconferencing or teleconferencing is not possible, hold meetings in open, well-ventilated spaces, and space chairs at least 6 feet apart. Encourage staff and attendees to stay home if sick.

Although [travel](#) should be minimized as much as possible during the COVID-19 pandemic, many jobs require travel, and it may not be possible to conduct certain job duties using virtual tools. The following measures may be taken to protect employees while traveling:

- Schedule travel to limit the distance travelled and need for overnight lodging.
- If multi-day travel is necessary, coordinate with travel preparers to identify hotels that disinfect rooms between stays and regularly disinfect surfaces in common areas.
- Provide employees with forms of transportation that minimize close contact with others such as fleet vehicles or rental vehicles.
- If public transportation is used, ask employees to follow the CDC guidance on how to [protect yourself when using transportation](#).
- If flying is necessary, select seats on flights that provide the greatest distance between other travelers and choose direct flights, if possible.
- Disinfect surfaces of rental cars or fleet vehicles (e.g., steering wheel, shifter, arm rests, etc.) between each use, using products that meet [EPA's criteria for use against SARS-CoV-2](#) [↗](#).
- Make sure employees are provided with the necessary supplies and understand protective measures they can take while traveling. These measures include:
 - Maintain a distance of at least 6 feet from other people (social distancing) as much as possible during travel.
 - Wear [cloth face coverings](#) when a distance of 6 feet is difficult to maintain, such as in airports, airplanes, and public transportation.
 - Use disinfecting wipes to clean commonly touched surfaces inside vehicles and airplanes.
 - Consider ordering food for pickup or delivery rather than eating out at restaurants.
 - Wash hands or use hand sanitizer regularly.
- Ensure that employees know that if they get sick they should stay home (not travel) or return home (if traveling) provided it is feasible for them to travel without endangering themselves or others.
- Make sure employees know who to contact if they are sick.

For more information, see [CDC guidance for travel in the United States](#)

Cleaning and Disinfection in the Workplace

How do I clean and disinfect machinery or equipment?

Current evidence, though still preliminary, suggests that SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19, may remain viable for hours to days on surfaces made from a variety of materials. It may be possible that a person can get COVID-19 by touching a surface or object that has the virus on it and then touching their own mouth, nose, or possibly their eyes, but this is not thought to be the main way the virus spreads.

If the machinery or equipment in question are not accessible to employees or have not been in contact with someone infected with COVID-19, they will not present an exposure hazard.

If machinery or equipment are thought to be contaminated and can be cleaned, follow the [CDC cleaning and disinfection recommendations](#). First, clean dirty surfaces with soap and water. Second, disinfect surfaces using [products that meet EPA's criteria for use against SARS-Cov-2](#) and are appropriate for the surface.

If machinery or equipment are thought to be contaminated and cannot be cleaned, they can be isolated. Isolate papers or any soft (porous) surfaces for a minimum of 24 hours before handling. After 24 hours, remove soft materials from the area and clean the hard (non-porous) surfaces per the cleaning and disinfection recommendations. Isolate hard (non-porous) surfaces that cannot be [cleaned and disinfected](#) for a minimum of 7 days before handling.

How can I safely use cleaning chemicals?

Follow [safe work practices when using cleaning chemicals](#) :

- Always wear gloves appropriate for the chemicals being used when you are cleaning and disinfecting. Additional personal protective equipment (PPE) may be needed based on the setting and product you are using.
- Never mix household bleach with ammonia or any other cleaner.
- Make sure that employees know which cleaning chemicals must be diluted and how to correctly dilute the cleaners they are using.
- Employers must ensure employees are trained on the hazards of the cleaning chemicals used in the workplace in accordance with OSHA's Hazard Communication standard ([29 CFR 1910.1200](#)).
- Follow the manufacturer's instructions for all cleaning and disinfection products for concentration, application method, and contact time.

In addition to cleaning and disinfecting, what can I do to decrease the spread of disease in my workplace? —

Employers can also:

- Provide tissues and no-touch disposal receptacles.
- Provide soap and water in the workplace. If soap and water are not readily available, use alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol. If hands are visibly dirty, soap and water should be chosen over hand sanitizer.
- Place hand sanitizer in multiple locations to encourage good [hand hygiene](#) practices.
- Place [posters](#) that encourage staying home when sick, the importance of [hand hygiene](#), and coughing and sneezing etiquette at the entrance to your workplace and in other workplace areas where employees are likely to see them.
- Discourage handshaking.

Should I adjust my ventilation system? —

The risk of spreading the virus that causes COVID-19 through ventilation systems has not been studied but is likely low. Routine HVAC maintenance is recommended. Although it is never the first line of prevention, consider general ventilation adjustments in your workplace, such as increasing ventilation and increasing the amount of outdoor air used by the system. Maintain the indoor air temperature and humidity at comfortable levels for building occupants.

How should restrooms be cleaned and disinfected? —

CDC and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) have jointly developed guidance for [cleaning and disinfecting public spaces](#), including restrooms. Employers should develop a plan for routine cleaning and disinfection, including the regular cleaning and disinfection of high-touch surfaces such as doorknobs, faucets, toilets, and other restroom furnishings.

Custodial staff should wear personal protective equipment (PPE) based on the setting and cleaning product they are using. To protect your staff and ensure that the products are used effectively, staff should be instructed on how to apply the disinfectants according to label instructions and precautions. Consider posting a cleaning schedule in the restrooms and marking off when each round of cleaning is completed.

If I shut down my facility as a result of a COVID-19 case or outbreak, what is the recommended way to clean and disinfect, and what is the appropriate timeframe to resume operations?

- Follow CDC guidance for [cleaning and disinfection](#).
- Wait 24 hours before cleaning and disinfecting to minimize potential for exposure to respiratory droplets. If 24 hours is not feasible, wait as long as possible.
- Open outside doors and windows to increase air circulation in the area.

Cleaning staff should clean and disinfect all areas including offices, bathrooms, and common areas, focusing especially on frequently touched surfaces.

- Clean dirty surfaces with soap and water prior to disinfection.
- Next, disinfect surfaces using [products that meet EPA's criteria for use against SARS-Cov-2](#) [↗](#), the virus that causes COVID-19, and that are appropriate for the surface.
- Follow the manufacturer's instructions for all cleaning and disinfection products for concentration, application method, contact time, and required PPE.

Operations can resume as soon as the cleaning and disinfection are completed.

Critical Infrastructure

How do I know if my business is considered critical?

The Department of Homeland Security developed a [list](#) [↗](#) of essential critical infrastructure employees to help state and local officials as they work to protect their communities, while ensuring continuity of functions critical to public health and safety as well as economic and national security. State and local officials make the final determinations for their jurisdictions about critical infrastructure employees.

Should I allow critical infrastructure employees to work if they have been exposed but are not showing symptoms of COVID-19?

Functioning [critical infrastructure](#)  is imperative during the response to the COVID-19 emergency, for both public health and safety as well as community well-being. When continuous remote work is not possible, critical infrastructure businesses should use strategies to reduce the likelihood of spreading the disease. This includes, but is not necessarily limited to, separating staff by off-setting shift hours or days and implementing social distancing. These steps can preserve and protect the workforce and allow operations to continue.

To ensure continuity of operations of essential functions, CDC advises that [critical infrastructure employees](#) may be permitted to continue work following potential exposure to COVID-19, provided they remain asymptomatic and additional safety practices are implemented to protect them and the community. However, reintegrating exposed, asymptomatic employees to onsite operations, while discussed in the critical infrastructure guidance, should not be misinterpreted as always being the first or most appropriate option to pursue in managing critical work tasks. Staying home may still be the most preferred and protective option for exposed employees. Critical infrastructure businesses have an obligation to limit, to the extent possible, the reintegration of in-person employees who have experienced an exposure to COVID-19 but remain symptom-free in ways that best protect the health of the employee, their co-employees, and the general public.

Create a [critical infrastructure sector response plan](#). Cross-training employees to perform critical job functions so the workplace can operate even if key employees are absent and match critical job functions with other equally skilled and available employees who have not experienced an exposure to COVID-19.

Critical infrastructure employees who have been exposed but remain symptom-free and must return to in-person work should adhere to the following practices before and during their work shift:

- Pre-screen for symptoms
- Monitor regularly for symptoms
- Wear a [cloth face covering](#)
- Practice social distancing
- Clean and disinfect workspaces

Employees with symptoms should be sent home and should not return to the workplace until they have met the [criteria to discontinue home isolation](#).

See [Implementing Safety Practices for Critical Infrastructure Employees Who May Have Had Exposure to a Person with Suspected or Confirmed COVID-19](#) for more information.

Is other specific CDC guidance available for critical infrastructure workplaces?

CDC has guidance for [first responders and law enforcement](#) as well as a [series of fact sheets](#) for specific critical infrastructure employee groups. Unless otherwise specified, the CDC [interim guidance for businesses and employers](#) applies to critical infrastructure workplaces as well.

Additional Resources

- [Interim Guidance for Businesses and Employers](#)
- [Cleaning and Disinfecting Your Facility](#)
- [Resources for First Responders and Law Enforcement](#)
- [EPA: Disinfectants for Use Against SARS-CoV-2](#) 
- [FDA: Food Safety and the Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\)](#) 
- [HHS/DOL: Guidance on Preparing Workplaces for COVID-19](#)  
- [DHS: Guidance on the Essential Critical Infrastructure Workforce](#) 

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